



## MAC Highlights 2015

We've had a productive 2015 at MAC. Thanks to your help we were able to advocate for more children, convened a new task force that will help young adults with disabilities have more opportunities, and launched a new program which offers our services to Latino parents. These are just a few of our several accomplishments this year. For the whole list, keep scrolling!

- MAC led advocacy efforts leading to implementation of the new law requiring **state Medicaid coverage of ABA services for children with autism and assistive technology (AAC) devices and software**, including tablets. The state agreed to expand coverage of AAC devices for adults as well as children.
- Our Autism Center successfully advocated for **\$137 million in the state budget to implement new state Medicaid coverage of ABA services** for children with autism (ASD) from low-income families now have coverage commensurate to that afforded to children covered by private insurance.
- MAC's Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) plays a leadership role in the implementation of the new **safe and supportive schools** law. TLPI's director serves as co-chair with the designee of the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission. She has led deliberations and helped develop the Commission's consensus-based report to the legislature which is expected to be released in late December or early January 2016.
- MAC initiated a **major research effort** in five schools that are using TLPI's inquiry-based approach to become a trauma-sensitive school. American Institutes of Research will research the work in each school and provide much needed data and information about the process of becoming trauma sensitive and its unique impact on school culture and student outcomes. TLPI will share what it learns broadly through its website, [www.traumasensitiveschools.org](http://www.traumasensitiveschools.org).
- Though MAC's advocacy efforts, the Boston School Committee created a new **Opportunity and Achievement Gap Task Force** to address opportunity and achievement disparities for Black and Latino students and appointed our Boston School Reform director as a member.
- The Chapter 222 Coalition of the Education Law Task Force that MAC convenes continued to advocate for a strong rollout of the implementation of the **new school discipline law** to assure that local districts, including charter schools, are amending their student codes of conduct to be aligned with the law reducing the frequency of school exclusions. For example, we and other task force members proposed a new guidance to DESE regarding the practice of emergency removals because of our concerns around schools using "emergency removal" as a pretext to send students home and not counting the exclusion as an out-of-school suspension. In the 2014-15 school year, out-of-school suspensions decreased by a third compared to the 2012-13 school year.
- Through our **Helpline** resource, we answered the call with advice and technical assistance on special education and school discipline concerns for nearly 1,000 parents and others. Among those we assisted were 41 to whom we provided intensive technical assistance and 40 who we provided legal representation with our staff or pro bono attorneys.
- MAC's **state budget advocacy** resulted in increases for our five priority programs (in addition to the MassHealth funding listed above):
  - \$500,000 (a 150% increase) to support schools to become safe and supportive schools and to support the state education department to implement the new law.
  - \$1.2 million (a 20% increase) to increase access to higher education for older youth with autism and intellectual disabilities through the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment initiative;

- \$4.5 million (a 12.5% increase) for state funding to support the Children’s Autism Medicaid Waiver to provide in-home and community services for an additional 60 children with autism who are low-income and at risk of institutionalization (approximately 280 children total).
  - \$271.6 million (a 6% increase) for the state’s special education “circuit breaker” fund.
  - \$250,000 (a 2% increase) in the alternative education line item to support education programs under the chapter 222 school discipline law.
- With the 70 member task force that we convened, MAC produced a comprehensive action plan to increase **inclusive employment pathways and opportunities for Boston youth with disabilities**.
  - MAC launched a new initiative, **Proyecto Acceso a la Educación Especial**, with a Spanish-speaking attorney dedicated to providing outreach, training, and legal assistance to Latino parents of children with autism and other disabilities.
  - MAC played a prominent role in the Boston Public School **superintendent selection process**. Boston School Reform staff was invited to participate on interview panel and also organized a sophisticated community “check out” process to vet the four finalists. Staff was then invited to serve on the new superintendent’s transition team, organized an “East Boston Day” for the Listen and Learn Tour, and contributed to the development of Dr. Tommy Chang’s 100 Day Plan.
  - MAC continued its fight for the **recruitment, hiring, development of diverse teachers in Boston Public Schools**. Our advocacy led to the preservation and expansion of alternative teacher pathway programs within BPS. These pipelines offer high quality candidates, who did not pursue teaching through traditional means, an opportunity to go through an accelerated training program with added supports. Boston teachers of color are retiring in large numbers, so without MAC’s advocacy the school department’s teaching force would be even less diverse than it is now.
  - **TLPI’s national profile** and reach continues to grow. We sold or distributed over 4,200 copies of *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* (volumes 1 or 2) as part of the 115,000 downloads and print copies of both volumes in circulation over the past 10 years. The TLPI website has been visited by 74,000 people from throughout the U.S. and from 150 countries around the world.
  - We developed, piloted, and conducted a **new training curriculum** for nearly 350 parents and professionals focused on the many components of the **Autism Omnibus Act**. The training provides an overview of new services and opportunities available to children, adults, and families under the new law, and includes strategies and procedures to help ensure access to these services.
  - MAC’s transition workgroup submitted a final report and recommendations to support DESE’s development of a new online IEP by drafting a **new transition IEP** for students age 13-22. MAC Successfully advocated for a **new state policysupporting appropriate provision of paraprofessionals** to support students with ASD and other disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
  - As a result of our advocacy with the parent group, *Parents Concerned for Children with Autism in Lawrence*, **the Lawrence school district** made the following changes: contracted with Easter Seals to provide assistive technology services, hired two additional BCBA’s, contracted for training of paraprofessionals, partnered with Northern Essex Community College to provide inclusive higher education opportunities; and agreed to provide training and develop an action plan in order to educate more students with autism in inclusive settings.
  - MAC **supported three Young Adult Leader Fellows** with autism or intellectual disabilities to develop critically important advocacy and employment skills. The Fellows provided youth, parents, educators, and legislators with vital information about the potential of young adults with disabilities to succeed in the workplace, greatly enhancing MAC’s advocacy success
  - MAC has begun to implement the strategic plan developed by the Harvard Business School Community Action Partners to **expand pro bono capacity and improve our Helpline services**.
  - MAC increased its education and training capacity in special education legal matters by producing in-depth **blogs** for the legal community.

- MAC and the Code of Conduct Advisory Committee (COCAC) met with senior BPS officials to continue revising **the BPS Code of Conduct** (COC). The amended Code is scheduled to be presented to the Boston School Committee on January 13, 2016.

*These accomplishments are made possible with the help and support of our partners, service-providers, volunteers, funders and donors.*

We thank you.